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FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND ACTION IN THE CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN

Draft agreed conclusions submitted by the Vice-Chairperson of the Commission, Ms. Eva Hildrum (Norway), on the critical area of concern: women and the economy

1. Governments, international organizations and the private sector should adopt a concerted, systematic and multi-pronged approach to accelerating women's full participation in economic decision-making, and ensure the mainstreaming of gender perspective at all levels.

2. Governments should promote and support the elimination of biases in the education system, and take steps to broaden women's access to career choices and fields of study, including in technological and other growth areas.

3. Governments should ensure, inter alia, that macroeconomic policies are gender-sensitive and friendly to small-scale and medium-sized enterprises. Local-level regulations and administrative arrangements should be conducive to women entrepreneurs.

4. Micro-credit schemes should be monitored to evaluate the efficiency of such schemes in terms of their impact on increasing women's productivity, income earning capacity and integration into the economy.

5. Governments should ensure that collateral requirements are flexible so as to allow women, especially poor women and women in rural areas, access to credit, and traditional savings schemes as well as women's banks and cooperatives should be encouraged.

6. Governments and non-governmental organizations that provide training services should focus on institution-building and consciousness-raising as well

as on improving and upgrading technical skills, including business and management skills. Local and traditional technologies and products based on women's knowledge should be promoted.

7. Governments should provide incentives for women-owned enterprises in environmental industries, resource-based industries and export-oriented industries as a link between sustainable development and poverty eradication.

8. Governments should ensure that rural women's economic rights are being promoted and implemented through their access to economic resources, including land, property rights and credit.

9. Women managers and women entrepreneurs should respond to other women's needs as shareholders, as workers and as consumers; should serve as role models; and should make their voices heard in places where strategic economic decisions are made.

10. Governments, non-governmental organizations and women's organizations should develop incentives for outstanding women entrepreneurs.

11. Women entrepreneurs should create networks and expand their scope to regional and international levels.

12. Governments and the private sector should develop a package of services to women entrepreneurs, including technical services, information on markets, training and credit.

13. To secure a critical mass of women's participation in top decision-making positions, Governments should implement and monitor anti-discriminatory laws, and the public administration and the private sector should comply with these laws and introduce changes into corporate culture. Teaching guides for gender sensitivity, and monitoring systems should be developed. They should also introduce objective and transparent procedures for recruitment, gender-sensitive career planning and monitoring systems.

14. Trade unions and non-governmental organizations should monitor, publicize and celebrate the enterprises and organizations that take initiatives for the advancement of women as well as publicize information on the companies that violate anti-discrimination laws.

15. Governments, labour unions and the private sector should develop and use analytical tools to compare wages in female- and male-dominated occupations, and focus particularly on minimum wages in low-wage industries.

16. Governments should elaborate/implement legal and administrative measures to facilitate reconciliation of work and family life, such as parental leave and flexible working schemes for men and women.

17. Governments should ratify the new International Labour Organization (ILO) convention on home-based workers.

18. Governments and employers should ensure the protection of migrant women workers' rights and prevent the trafficking in women and children.

19. Governments should monitor equal opportunity policies and labour practices of transnational corporations.

20. Women should identify and support women-friendly corporations and socially responsible businesses through investments and use of their services or products.

21. Unpaid work in the household and in agriculture, and volunteer work should be measured and valued using improved methods including regular time-use studies, and international organizations and research institutions should provide technical assistance to developing countries in valuing and making visible women's unpaid work.

22. Macroeconomic policies and structural adjustment policies should be formulated and monitored in a gender-sensitive way in order to generate positive effects for women and men, drawing on research on the gender impact of macro- and microeconomic policies.

23. Better coordination and dialogue, at all levels, between the Bretton Woods organizations and the United Nations as well as between the United Nations system and the World Trade Organization should be instituted in order to ensure the effectiveness of their programmes for women.

24. Governments and international financial institutions should re-evaluate liberalization policies and assess impact on women.

25. Governments should ensure that they nominate a critical mass of women to serve on governing bodies of the United Nations system dealing with policy-making in the areas of finance, economic development, trade and commerce (for example, the Fifth Committee and the Second Committee of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Trade and Development Board, the Industrial Development Board, the governing body of the World Trade Organization and so on).

26. Further research should be undertaken by the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat on developing a series of convincing "business cases" showing the advantage of women's participation in top management and, conversely, the costs of their exclusion.

27. Issues such as the impact of structural adjustment on women should be further examined and could be taken up in the context of the discussion of the report of the Secretary-General on the mobilization of women in development, to be considered by the General Assembly at its fifty-first session.